



**For Immediate Release**

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## **AMERICAN INDIAN LEADERS ATTEND TRIBAL NATIONS SUMMIT**

### ***San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Pursues Critical American Indian Policy Issues***

**Washington, DC – December 16, 2010** – President Obama announced to a group of American Indian tribal leaders today that the United States will sign on to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The announcement was made during the opening session of the second Tribal Nations Summit hosted by the president attended by James Ramos, Chairman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

“This is an historic development,” said Chairman Ramos. “Indigenous people around the world – including here in the United States - have been waiting a long time for the nations of the world to give recognition to unique indigenous rights. I am pleased that President Obama and his administration have decided to support the Declaration that all other nations have embraced.”

The Declaration was one of several highlights cited by the president as he outlined the policy achievements of his administration. Other achievements include the permanent re-authorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which allows health care services delivered to Indian people across the country to catch up with advances in medical technology and delivery systems.

Chairman Ramos, along with leaders of more than 560 Indian tribal nations, braved the cold this morning waiting for the doors to the Main Interior Building to open, where the Tribal Nations Summit was held in the Sidney Yates Auditorium in Washington, DC.

In November 2009, President Obama hosted the first summit with Indian tribes by issuing a new approach to consultations with Indian tribes over policy issues that affect tribal governments and their communities. At that time, he underscored the fact that federal responsibilities to Indian tribes are a government-wide obligation to be shared by the entirety of the federal government. President Obama issued directives to each federal department to develop new plans for consulting with tribal governments.

“This was a great day for Indian tribal nations,” Ramos said. “We still have a long way to go to

fulfill the promises made to our ancestors for lands and other valuable resources ceded to the federal government since the founding of this great country. But the gains made in addressing policy issues by this administration are certainly reassuring.”

Chairman Ramos also met with Education Secretary Arne Duncan this week, urging him to engage in partnership with Indian education to improve the quality of education on Indian reservations. The U.S. Department Education recognized the efforts of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians to help improve educational services at the Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, Calif., by supporting new and innovative career education pathways.

Ramos addressed officials from the Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service, and the Internal Revenue Service, seeking to advance clear policies for health care services and tax issues affecting American Indians and Alaska Natives.

#### **About the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians**

The San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians is a federally recognized American Indian tribe located near the city of Highland, Calif. The Serrano Indians are the indigenous people of the San Bernardino highlands, passes, valleys and mountains who share a common language and culture. The San Manuel reservation was established in 1891 and recognized as a sovereign nation with the right of self-government. Since time immemorial, the San Manuel tribal community has endured change and hardship. Amidst these challenges the tribe continued to maintain its unique form of governance. Like other governments it seeks to provide a better quality of life for its citizens by building infrastructure, maintaining civil services and promoting social, economic and cultural development. Today San Manuel tribal government oversees many governmental units including the departments of fire, public safety, education and environment.

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